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Cox: Opening Remarks

Opening Remarks

Reaching Out in Unsettling Situations

Sooner or later, there comes a time in our lives when we need advice on a troubling matter. You know the feeling— anxiety escalates, the mind mulls consequences, and there's no escaping the impending confrontation that accompanies a crucial decision. Such is life, right? But no matter how we ultimately resolve the issue, we know that confiding in someone we trust can ease the anguish. True, the person may not have the answer we are seeking, but at least that person's willingness to listen and share thoughts can help us sort through the quagmire, provide comfort, and potentially improve our perspective on the problem.

Such one-on-one exchanges are often invaluable. They foster a sense of connection and teach us that, however insurmountable the dilemma may seem, we're not alone—there are people we can turn to who will understand what we're up against. And chances are, we'll survive and grow from the experience. This, of course, is not always the case, for some matters require much more than personal advice. However, for those that can be resolved, someone else's support and encouragement can make a world of difference.

In "Helping Out" (page 32), writer Cynthia Moritz introduces us to several Syracuse University professors who extend their role as advisors beyond the basics to help students deal with all sorts of life issues. Nursing professor Bobbie Perdue, for instance, provides guidance to students of color who've encountered racism, while sculpture professor Rodger Mack recalls lifting one student out of the doldrums by offering some unortho-

dox advice. For many students, college is a defining experience: They wrestle with who they are and want to become; they encounter the rewards and trappings of independence—and the importance of balancing the two; and they face the complexities of such issues as peer pressure, relationships, sexuality, financing an education, and their future. It is a time for them to explore their interests, discover and develop their talents, and expand not only their views of themselves, but how they envision the world and their place in it. They may find the classroom to be a haven, or a downright struggle.

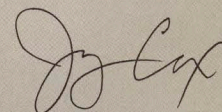
But what's essential to their development is that they learn to accept responsibility, take on challenges, persevere, and succeed on their own terms.

Along the way, they undoubtedly are tested by unsettling situations.

When such instances become overwhelming, it's reassuring to know there are faculty mem-

bers willing to assist them as friends, mentors, even surrogate parents. By reaching out and communicating in their own personal way, these professors make a big difference in students' lives.

Of course, professors aren't the only ones on campus that students go to for advice. There are staff members, administrators, graduate teaching assistants, coaches, and other professionals to whom students can turn to lift their spirits and get back on track. Many of us understand and care about what these students need—and what's most important is that we're here to help when they come to us.



JAY COX
EDITOR

